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PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION AND LETTERS OF APPOINTMENT DURING THE GORYEO DYNASTY

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Introduction

In the history and culture of Japan, many objects and words are designated as “Goryeo” (Koma, Kôrai). However, in most cases if they are from the period of antiquity they are related to Goguryeo or Balhae, while if they are of the early modern period, they are linked to the Joseon dynasty. In contrast, the subject of this essay, the Goryeo period (918–1392) has left little impact on the vocabulary of Japan. This is probably a consequence of the fact that while there were instances of isolated or intermittent interaction between medieval Japan and Goryeo, formal diplomatic relations were never established.¹ For this reason, even today the history of medieval Korea, that is the Goryeo dynasty, has held far less allure than earlier and later periods.

However, this reflects the view from the island nation of Japan. If one turns one’s gaze to the whole of the contemporaneous East Asian world, Goryeo was closely involved with the continental dynasties of the Song, Liao, Jin, and Yuan. In the face of far greater suffering than Japan, Goryeo survived as nation. In order to survive in such a challenging international environment, the political institutions of the Goryeo came to bear the character of a centralized autocracy. However, the most critical feature of its bureaucratic system was the fact that it developed largely in emulation of the institutions of the Chinese Tang and Song periods. We have two classic works on this subject, Byeon Tae-seob 邊太燮’s *History of Political Institutions of the Goryeo Dynasty* 高麗政治制度史研究² and Suto Yoshiyuki 周藤吉之’s *The Bureaucratic System of the Goryeo Dynasty* 高麗朝官僚制の研究³. The former tends to emphasize the distinctiveness of the Goryeo bureaucratic

¹ Aoyama Kôryô 青山公亮, *NichiRai kôshôshi no kenkyû* 日麗交渉史の研究 (Tokyo: Meiji daigaku bungakubu kenkyûsho, Tôyôshi, volume three, 1955); Yi Yeong 李嶺, *Wakô to NichiRai kankeishi* 倭寇と日麗關係史 (Tokyo: Tôkyô daigaku shuppankai, 1999).

² Byeon Tae-seob 邊太燮, *Goryeo jeongchi jedosa yeongu* 高麗政治制度史研究 (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1971).

³ Suto Yoshiyuki 周藤吉之, *Kôraichô kanryôsei no kenkyû* 高麗朝官僚制の研究 (Tokyo: Hôsei daigaku shuppanyoku, 1980).

system whereas the latter stresses commonalities with the Tang, and especially the Song, systems.

One of the most central research questions related to the Goryeo bureaucratic system is elucidating the precise conditions of the Korean reception of the Tang and Song bureaucratic systems and how those systems were put into use. It would be hard to conclude that past research has provided a thorough examination of either the documentary evidence or the operation of the documentary administration as seen through the format of those documents. However, the considerable body of research by Japanese scholars on the Tang period bureaucratic appointment system and Japan's strong tradition of the study of ancient documents offer important insights for understanding the Goryeo bureaucratic system.

With the discovery of the Dunhuang documents in 1900, twentieth century Oriental Studies progressed markedly. Early on, such Japanese scholars as Niida Noboru 仁井田陞, Naitō Kenkichi 内藤乾吉, and Ōba Osamu 大庭脩 examined the contents of the “orders of bureaucratic appointment” 告身 from the Tang, one of the variety of documents discovered among the Dunhuang materials. More recently, Nakamura Hiroichi 中村裕一 has also produced a series of articles on these documents.⁴ Their outstanding work has illuminated the actual operation of the system of personnel administration 銓選 during the Tang period.

After the fall of the Tang dynasty, the Goryeo dynasty maintained the Tang's political institutions; it too issued letters of appointment upon the occasion of officials' appointment or dismissal. Although they have not garnered the kind of world attention that the Dunhuang documents have, a number of Goryeo period letters of appointment have survived. Is the Goryeo period administrative personnel system as revealed through these materials the same in fact as that of the Tang dynasty?

It is well-known that the Three Departments (Department of Secretariat, Chancellery, and State Affairs) exercised a profound influence on not only succeeding Chinese dynasties but also the administrative systems of Korea and other surrounding countries. It is without question that the Tang's administrative evalua-

⁴ Niida Noboru 仁井田陞, *Tō Sō hōritsu monjo no kenkyū* 唐宋法律文書の研究 (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin Tōkyō kenkyūsho, 1937); Naitō Kenkichi 内藤乾吉, “Tō no sanshō” 唐の三省, “Tonkō shutsudo no Tō kitoi Shin Gen kokushin” 敦煌出土の唐騎都尉秦元告身, in author's *Chūgoku hōseishi kōshō* 中國法制史考證 (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1962); Ōba Osamu 大庭脩, “Tō kokushin no komonjogakuteki kenkyū” in Saiiki bunka kenkyūkai, ed., *Saiiki bunka kenkyū* 西域文化研究 (Kyoto: Saiiki bunka kenkyūkai, 1960); Nakamura Hiroichi 中村裕一 *Tōdai seichoku kenkyū* 唐代制敕研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1991).

tion and orders of appointment deeply influenced the Goryeo system. To simply note that the Goryeo system owed much to the Tang, however, is not enough. In order to understand the similarities and differences of the Tang and Goryeo administrative systems and to shed light on the defining characteristics of the Korean bureaucratic system, the most critical task now is to reconstruct the actual operation of the administrative evaluation system based on the extant orders of appointment documents.

In contrast to Japan's strong tradition of the study of ancient documents in the field of Chinese history, research on Korean historical documents, whether in Korea or Japan, has been less vibrant. That being said, we do have some preliminary studies by Han Sang-jun 韓相俊 and Jang Dong-ik 張東翼.⁵ More recently they have been joined by the major work, *Documentary Studies from Ancient and Medieval Korea* 韓國古代中世古文書研究, edited by No Myeong-ho 盧明鎬.⁶

Drawing on previous scholarship, this essay offers my insights into materials related to the letters of appointments. In tracing the evolution of Goryeo's appointment system, I have tried to base myself as much as possible on the letters of appointment themselves.

⁵ Han Sang-jun and Jang Dong-ik, "Andong jibang e jeollaedoen Goryeo gomunseo chillye geom-to" 安東地方에 전래된 高麗 古文書 七例 檢討, *Gyeongbuk daehakkyo nonmunjip* 慶北大學校論文集 (immun-sahoe gwahak) 33 (1982); Jang Dong-ik, "Haesim ui daeseonsa gosin e daehan geom-to" 惠諡의 大禪師告身에 대한 檢討, *Han'guksa yeongu* 韓國史研究 34 (1981); "Gim bu ui chek sangbu go e daehan il geomto" 金傅의 冊尙父誥에 대한 一檢討, *Yeoksa gyoyuk nonjip* 歷史教育論集 3 (1982).

The essay jointly authored by Han and Jang is only a preliminary introduction, but it is extremely important in its call to examine the institution of royal proclamations 王言 (such as Imperial / Royal Order 詔/敕, 敕/教, Royal Comment 批, Royal Judgment 判) in the context of the government documents. My "Kôrai ôgenkô" 高麗王言考, *Shirin* 史林 77.1 (1994) follows up on this question and forms a basis of the present essay.

⁶ No Myeong-ho 盧明鎬, compiler, *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu* 韓國古代中世古文書研究 (Seoul: Seoul daehakkyo chulpanbu, 2000), two volumes.

Chapters two and three of the second volume of this collection, Choe Eon-sik 崔鉛植's "Goryeo sidae gukwang munseo ui jongnyu wa gineung" 高麗時代 國王文書의 種類와 機能 and Bak Jae-u 朴宰佑's "Goryeo sigi ui gosin gwa gwallyo imyong chegye" 高麗時期的 告身과 官吏任用體系 are directly relevant to the topic of the present essay. I was unable to consult these works in an earlier version of this essay [*Tôyôshi kenkyû* 東洋史研究 59.2 (2000)], but have extensively revised this version in light of their conclusions. However, I understand the place of the State Councilors, or the Grand Councilors of the Secretariat-Chancellery, in the personnel appointment system and the orders of appointment during the early Goryeo in fundamentally different terms from Choe and Bak. In their two essays mentioned above, Choe and Bak do not recognize the existence of personnel appointment by the State Councilors, while the present essay holds that the State Councilors played a critical role.

Section 1

Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment

In the administrative system of the Tang dynasty, the State Council, or the Grand Council of the Secretariat-Chancellery 中書門下,⁷ appointed upper-level officials, which consisted of officials of the fifth rank and above, with some exceptions of officials from the sixth rank and below (such as Assistant Section Chiefs of the Department of State Affairs 員外郎, Inspectors of the Office of Censors 監察御史, Imperial Court Attendants 供奉官 and others). These were “the regular participants of court rites” 常參官. Based on the information supplied by the Boards of Civil and Military Personnel 尚書吏兵部, the State Council compiled a draft list of appointments. When the Emperor ratified the plans, the appointment of officials of the fifth rank and above was announced by issuing a Letter of Constitutional Appointment 制授告身. Appointment of the rest of the regular participants from the sixth rank and lower was announced by issuing a Letter of Imperial Appointment 敕授告身.

This system of letters of appointment during the Tang dynasty was introduced to the Goryeo dynasty. This is clear from the few extant examples from the Goryeo dynasty of the format of the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment, such as the Letter of Appointment for Hyesim 慧諶 and the Letter of Appointment for Kim Bu 金傅. Elsewhere, I have examined these two documents in the context of the functions of the old Department of State Affairs 廣評省 and the old Department of Secretariat 內議省.⁸ In this section, I analyze the format and use of the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment.

First, Department of Secretariat drafted the texts of the letters. They observed the following formats:

“Chancellery... the person in charge should implement [this].”⁹

“Imperial order...the person in charge should implement [this].”¹⁰

⁷ The State Council was composed of the Chief Directors of the Departments of Secretariat and Chancellery with some officials who served concurrently as State Councilors, so it was called the Secretariat-Chancellery. The early Goryeo dynasty also adopted this system.

⁸ Yagi Takeshi 矢木毅, “Kōrai kokusho no kōhyōshō to naigishō” 高麗國初の廣評省と内議省、*Tōhō gakuhō* [Journal of Oriental Studies] 東方學報 (Kyoto) 72 (2000).

⁹ 門下…主者施行。

¹⁰ 敕…主者施行。

The former is the prescribed form of the Letter of Constitutional Appointment, and the latter is that of the Letter of Imperial Appointment.

Second, the texts produced by the Department of Secretariat were sent to the Department of Chancellery, which verified them. In the case of the Letter for Hyesim, after the Chancellery responded to the King, it petitioned that “the case should be sent to the office in charge for implementation.”¹¹ In the case of the Letter for Kim Bu, the procedure of reporting to the King was omitted and the case was passed directly to the Department of State Affairs with instructions that “the Imperial Order was issued as above, so receiving this notice, implement [this order].”¹² The former is the procedure for issuing the Letters of Constitutional Appointment, and the latter is the procedure for issuing the Letters of Imperial Appointment. We can conclude that the latter was easier to issue than the former.

Third, the Department of State Affairs, which was in charge of implementing Imperial Orders, issued a letter of appointment with a prescribed Notification 符 and sent it to the appointee, adding the instruction, “We have received the above Constitutional Order. Implement upon receipt of this Notification”¹³ or “We have received the above Imperial order. Implement upon receipt of this Notification.”¹⁴ Such were the respective procedures for issuing Letters of Constitutional and Imperial Appointment.

Therefore the process for issuing the Letter of Appointment for Hyesim and the Letter of Appointment for Kim Bu is as follows:

- a) The Department of Secretariat drafted the letter.
- b) The Department of Chancellery checked the draft.
- c) The Department of State Affairs implemented the draft and issued an official letter of appointment.

Thus we can see the Letters of Appointment for Hyesim and Kim Bu were issued through the three departments. (See fig.1) We can also see they possess all the characteristics of the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment.

However, we cannot assume that the system introduced to Goryeo dynasty functioned the same way as that of the Tang dynasty. In the Tang system, the Letters of Constitutional Appointment were issued to the officials of the fifth rank

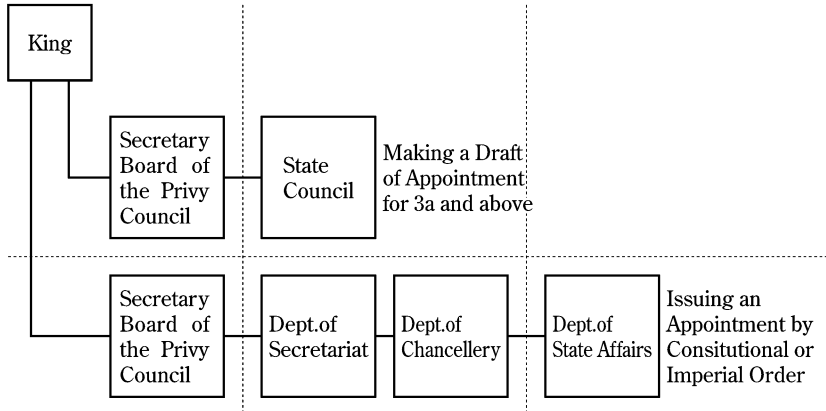
¹¹ 制書如右。請奉制、附外施行。謹言。

¹² 奉敕如右。牒到奉行。

¹³ 奉被制書如右。符到奉行。

¹⁴ 奉敕如右。符到奉行。

Fig. 1. Flow of the Orders (type 1)



and above, whereas the Letters of Imperial Appointment were issued to the rest of the regular participants of court rites who were of the sixth rank and below.

Choe Hae 崔滢, a famous Goryeo literatus during the period of subordination to the Mongol Empire, edited an anthology entitled the *Works of the Literati of the Eastern Kingdom: A Selection of Works Composed in Four and Six Character Rhymes* 東人之文・四六. This work preserves several examples of letters of appointment that include the text itself but omit the prescribed form of the issuing procedure. This work shows that with the exception of royal clansmen and Buddhist priests, the Letters of Constitutional Appointment were only issued to the State Councilors. They had the fixed formula “Chancellery...the person in charge should implement [this order].”¹⁵ They also had the fixed form, “You are to be specially appointed to a given post,”¹⁶ which meant the appointments were arranged directly by the King. Attached to these letters of appointment was a Royal Letter 敎書 (a private letter by the King), which made clear that the appointment was arranged by the King himself.

Choe Ja 崔滋, a famous literatus of the Military Dictatorship Period, wrote a collection of essays entitled *A Supplement to While Away the Time* 補閑集, in which he described the ceremony of appointment, the *seon-ma* 宣麻. The ceremony of appointment for the State Councilors was formally held just once a year, regardless of the frequency of the personnel changes among the State Councilors.

¹⁵ 門下...主者施行。

¹⁶ 可特授...

The letters of *ma-je* 麻制 (Constitutional Orders written on hemp paper) to be read aloud at the court were composed of three parts: the opening and ending paragraphs contained phrases common to all appointees, while the main paragraph described the personality and achievement of each appointee individually. When the ceremony was finished, the official letters of appointment were made and issued to each appointee. The letters were called Grand Letters of Appointment 大官誥. Attached to the beginning of each was a Royal Letter, an identical message to every appointee.¹⁷

The letters of appointment with an attached Royal Letter were only issued to the officials of the highest rank specially appointed by the King himself. Thus, the Grand Letters of Appointment described by Choe Ja's must have been the Letters of Constitutional Appointment that had the fixed form, "Chancellery...you are to be specially appointed to a certain position...the person in charge should implement [this]."¹⁸

Choe Ja's account says that members of the royal family were not permitted to join in the ceremony of appointment even if they were appointed by the Grand Letters of Appointment. Neither were officials from the rank of 3a and above (such as the Privy Councilors 樞密, Senior and Chief Directors of the Department of State Affairs 僕射、尙書, Senior Grand Generals 上將軍 and so forth) permitted to join in the ceremony of appointment.¹⁹ They were to be appointed by Junior Letters of Appointment 小官誥 (see below), which provided that the Chief Privy Councilor was especially permitted to join in the ceremony and to receive the Grand Letter of Appointment during the Military Dictatorship period. Thus, we can conclude that at least in the early period of the Goryeo dynasty, with some exceptions in the case of royal relatives and Buddhist priests, Letters of Constitutional Appointment (or Grand Letters of Appointment 大官誥) were only issued for personnel changes among State Councilors.

Additionally, the Royal Letters 敕書, which were attached to the Grand Letters of Appointment, followed a prescribed form. They read, "Royal Ordinance to a certain person...So here issue this order. I hope you fully understand my intention."²⁰ I think this must have been the introduction of the prescribed forms

¹⁷ *A Supplement to While Away the Time* 補閑集, 3:10a, contained in *Goryeo myeonghyeon jib* [Collected Works of famous Goryeo worthies] 高麗名賢集, 5 vols (Seoul: Seonggyun-gwan Daehakkyo Daedong Munhwa Yeonguwon 成均館大學校大東文化研究院 1987).

¹⁸ 門下...可特授...主者施行。

¹⁹ *A Supplement to While Away the Time* 補閑集, 3:10a.

²⁰ 敕某...故茲詔示、想宜知悉。

of Imperial Letters 敕書 used during the Tang and Song Dynasties. The Imperial Letters of China generally had a fixed form that read, “Imperial ordinance to a certain person...So here issue this Imperial order. I hope you fully understand my intention.”²¹ Therefore, the forms of Royal Letters in Goryeo must have been based on the system of Imperial Letters of China, with the modification of the character for “Imperial” 敕 to “Royal” 教.

The decision to replace the character “imperial edict” 詔 with the character “royal edict” 教 is said to have been made in the fifth year of the reign of King Seongjong 成宗 (986) as a mark of respect for the Song Emperor. However, the Goryeo court later resumed use of the term “imperial edict” 詔, which became common in the royal documents. What was disused was the character 敕, not the character 詔. Thus, the Imperial Letters 敕書 of China were called Royal Letters 教書 in Goryeo. In China, Imperial Letters were generally called His Majesty’s Letters 詔書, thus in the Goryeo dynasty, the Royal Letters were also called His Majesty’s Letters 詔書.

Now let us turn to examine the variety of recipients of the Letters of Royal Appointment, which had a fixed form as follows: “Imperial Order...the person in charge should implement [this].”

As mentioned above, the Appointment Letter for Kim Bu, issued in the early years of the Goryeo dynasty, followed the same format as this, but no such examples appear in the *Works of the Literati of the Eastern Kingdom: A Selection of Works Composed in Four and Six Character Rhymes*. That is because the character 敕 was replaced with the character 教 in the Goryeo dynasty. Thus in the Goryeo dynasty, what should be called the Letters of Imperial (or Royal) Appointment were those which had the fixed form, “Royal Order...the person in charge should implement [this].”

Among the materials transcribed in the *Works of the Literati of the Eastern Kingdom: A Selection of Works Composed in Four and Six Character Rhymes*, we can find only two items that observed the fixed form of the Letters of Imperial Appointment, namely “Appointment Letter for Yun Eon-jik as Chief Director of the Board of Construction Works” and “Letter for Grandmother Kim of the Queen Dowager of the Yeon-heung Gung as countess of Hwa-ui County.” But we have already seen in *A Supplement to While Away the Time* that the officials of rank 3a

²¹ 敕某...故茲詔示、想宜知悉。See *Guidance to Terminology* 辭學指南 contained in *Yuhai* 玉海, 202:35a. (a facsimile edition, jointly published by Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe 江蘇古籍出版社 and Shanghai Shudian 上海書店, 1987)

and above were to be appointed with “The Junior Letter of Appointment.” Thus, we can conclude that the “Appointment Letter for Yun Eon-jik as Chief Director of the Board of Construction Works” meets the conditions for a Junior Letter of Appointment, because the Chief Director of the Board of Construction Works was ranked as 3a.

Therefore, the format of “Junior Letters of Appointment” was nothing but that of the Letters of Imperial Appointment, which read, “Royal Order...the person in charge should implement [this].” At least in the early period of the Goryeo dynasty, Junior Letters of Appointment were issued to officials ranked 3a and above, namely the Privy Councilors 樞密, Senior and Chief Directors of the Department of State Affairs 僕射、尙書, Senior Grand Generals 上將軍 and so forth.

As discussed above, the Goryeo dynasty clearly did use the format of the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment of the Tang dynasty China. However, they were issued to a far narrower range of recipients in the Goryeo dynasty: the letters of Constitutional Appointment were issued for personnel changes among the State Councilors, and the Letters of Royal Appointment were issued for personnel changes of the officials ranked 3a and above, excluding the State Councilors. Furthermore, they were issued only once a year during the annual personnel changes, usually held in the twelfth month of lunar calendar. Thus, we can say that the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment were just special marks of honor, which were granted exclusively to the highest rank of officials (3a and above).

Section 2

Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council and Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel

The letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment were issued only to the uppermost officials, those ranked 3a and above. What kind of letters did the rest of the bureaucracy receive? In this case too, materials preserved in Choe Hae’s *Works of the Literati of the Eastern Kingdom* provide helpful information.

Recently I received a Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council, which states that I was appointed, by His Majesty’s favor, as Second Remonstrator of major sixth rank, holding the office of Drafting Secretary concurrently. Such prestigious positions have suddenly

been extended to me who lacks talents. I only fear that I will fail to perform my duties properly.²²

Recently I received a Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel, which states that I was tentatively appointed, by His Majesty's favor, as Attendant of the Gate of the Inner Court. [His Majesty's] benevolence was expanded from the zenith and reached [even] to me at its nadir; I was ordered to be one of the Assistants of Master of Ceremony in the Court, taking up this honorable position on a trial basis. I fear in my heart that the duty exceeds my ability and it merely increases my sense of inability.²³

Recently I received a Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel, which states that in addition to my original position, I was appointed, by His Majesty's favor, as Duty Member of the Royal Academy of Literature. [His Majesty's] benevolence was extended from the golden palace and reached [even] to this foolish and unworthy [servitor]. I was allowed to join the Academy without good reason and suddenly came to keep company with prominent scholars. As the duty is beyond my ability, my fears only increase without [end].²⁴

The above are the letters of thanks of Bak Ho 朴浩, a literatus during the reign of King Suk-jong 肅宗 (1095-1105). Bak presented these letters to the king to express his gratitude upon assuming his posts. From these letters of appreciation we can see that the notification of appointment was done through a Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council in the first case and a Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel in the second and third cases.

In the administrative system of the Tang dynasty, letters of appointment were issued from the Board of Civil or Military Personnel in a prescribed form called *fu* 符 or Notification. However, Bak's letters of notification were issued in the format of a Notice 牒, which differed from the Notification 符 of the Tang dynasty. The Notice 牒 refers to letters that were transmitted between public

²² *WLEK (Works of the Literati of the Eastern Kingdom)*, 11:23b-24b, contained in *Goryeo myeonghyeon jib* [Collected Works of famous Goryeo worthies] 高麗名賢集.

²³ *WLEK* 12:2b-3a

²⁴ *WLEK* 12:3a-4a

offices, so it seems likely that the Notice of Constitutional Appointment 制牒 was issued by the State Council, which received and transmitted the king's order. The Notice of Royal Appointment 教牒 was issued by the Board of Civil Personnel, which likewise received and then transmitted the king's order (perhaps through the State Council).

In what form were they issued? Here we may draw upon the work of Nakamura Hiroichi, who has examined the format of the Notice of Imperial Order 敕牒 of the Tang period.²⁵

Notice from the State Council to (a given person).

Notice: We received an Imperial Order (as below). Follow the Imperial Order as soon as you receive this notice. Thus we send this notice.

Notice on the (Year, Month, Day)

Signatures of the State Councilors (position, family name and first name)²⁶

The Notice of Imperial Order was issued by the State Council, which received and transmitted the Imperial Order. Thus when considering the format of the Notice of Constitutional Appointment during the Goryeo dynasty, we should refer to the Notice of Imperial Order.

Nakamura has shown that there was a variant of the Notice of Imperial Order, issued from the Department of State Affairs which received and transmitted the Notice of Imperial Order from the State Council. As samples of this, Nakamura offered materials from the writing of the famous Buddhist priest Bukong 不空, such as A Notice of Imperial Order from the Section of Religious Rites (of the Board of Rites in the Dept. of State Affairs) 尚書祠部敕牒. In this document, Bukong successfully petitioned for seven monks to be appointed as priests on the birthday of the Emperor.

(a) In regard to the case mentioned above, Bukong, the priest of Xing-shansi Temple 興善寺 requested the following...

(b) Notice from State Council to the Section of Religious Rites.

Notice: We received an Imperial Order, stating, "Do as requested"
...Follow the Imperial Order as soon as you receive this notice...Thus

²⁵ Nakamura Hiroichi 中村裕一 *Tôdai seichoku kenkyû* 唐代制敕研究, pp. 513-545.

²⁶ The original text in Classical Chinese is as follows: 中書門下、牒某。牒。奉敕...牒至准敕。故敕。年月日。牒。宰相具官姓名。

we send this notice.

Notice on the second year of the Guangde 廣德 reign period (764), the tenth lunar month, nineteenth day.

Vice-Director of the Department of Secretariat, State Councilor Du Hongjian 杜鴻漸

Vice-Director of the Department of Secretariat, State Councilor Yuan Zai 元載

Vice-Director of the Department of Chancellery, State Councilor Wang 王 (dispatched)

Honorary Chief Director of the Department of Chancellery Li 李 (dispatched)

Honorary Senior Director of the Department of State Affairs, State Councilor (dispatched)

Grand General, the Chief Director of the Department of Secretariat (dispatched)

(c) Notice from the Section of Religious Rites to Bukong.

Notice: We received a Notice of Imperial Order from the State Council as above. Follow the Imperial Order as soon as you receive this notice. So we send this notice.

Notice on the second year of the Guangde reign period, the tenth lunar month, nineteenth day.

Section chief

Chief clerk / Clerk²⁷

In the document above, the summary of Bukong's letter in which he requested the appointment of seven monks as priests was cited in Part A. Next, the State Council received the Imperial Order and transmitted it to the Section of Religious Rites of the Department of State Affairs in Part B. Finally, in Part C, the Section of Religious Rites, which oversaw appointment of Buddhist priests, acted on the request, following the Notice of Imperial Order from the State Council. In short, these were the procedures for issuing the Emperor's approval for an appointment through the State Council to the office in charge, who would imple-

²⁷ The original passages in Classical Chinese are as follows: (a) …右。興善寺三藏沙門不空奏、…。(b) 中書門下、牒祠部。牒。奉敕。宜依。牒至准敕。故牒。廣德二年十月十九日。中書侍郎平章事杜鴻漸。中書侍郎平章事元載。黃門侍郎平章事王 使。檢校侍中李 使。檢校右僕射平章事 使。太尉兼中書令 使。(c) 尚書祠部、牒三藏不空。牒。奉中書門下敕牒、如右。牒至准敕。故牒。廣德二年十月十九日、牒。
[祠部郎中某] 令史/主事。

ment the order. We can use what we know of these Tang procedures in our efforts to restore the format of the Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel during the Goryeo dynasty.

Furthermore, we are fortunate that a document with nearly all features of the format of the Notice of Imperial Order 敕牒 has been preserved among the certifications of those who passed the civil service examination, the Red Warrants 紅牌.

By Sanction of Royal Order you are appointed as a successful candidate of the third rank 丙科及第.

Immediately upon receipt of this notification, obey the Royal Order. Thus, we have issued this notice.

Notice on the fifth year of Taehwa 泰和 (1205), the fourth lunar month, a certain day.

Associate State Councilor, Wang

Vice-Director of the Department of Chancellery, State Councilor, Im

Vice-Director of the Department of Chancellery, Senior State Councilor, Choe

Vice-Director of the Department of Chancellery, Senior State Councilor, Gi

Vice-Director of the Department of Chancellery, Senior State Councilor, Choe²⁸

In last section of the Red Warrant for Jang Yang-su 張良守紅牌 cited above, we can see the format “Immediately upon receipt of this notification, obey the Royal Order... Thus, we have issued this notice ...Notice on Year / Month / Day.” There follows the signatures of the State Councilors. They conform perfectly to the prescribed format of the Notice of Imperial Order during the Tang dynasty. Thus, the form of this document was undoubtedly introduced from the Tang Notice of Imperial Order, with the proviso that the character “Imperial” 敕 was replaced with the character “Royal” 教.

²⁸ The original text in Classical Chinese reads as follows: 敕可丙科及第。牒至准敕。故牒。泰和五年乙丑四月日牒。金紫光祿大夫、參知政事、太子少傅王。門下侍郎平章事、寶文閣大學士、同修國史、柱國、判戶部事任。門下侍郎、同中書門下平章事、吏部尚書、上柱國、上將軍、判兵部御史臺事崔。門下侍郎、同中書門下平章事、上柱國、上將軍、監修國史、判禮部事奇。門下侍郎、同中書門下平章事、修文殿大學士、監修國史、上柱國、判吏部事崔。 See No Myeong-ho 盧明鎬, compiler, *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu* 韓國古代中世古文書研究, volume one, pp. 53-55.

However, because there are missing fragments in the beginning of the document, some sentences are difficult to decipher. They are as follows:

the above person, Jang Yang-su, (…)
 the Center of the Civil Service Examination (…)
 by Royal judgment (…)²⁹

Therefore, it was Center for Civil Service Examinations (i.e. the Board of Rites) rather than the State Council that drafted this plan. It presented the list of successful examination candidates to the King. After receiving the Royal Judgment 判 of approval, the case was sent to the State Council, bearing the king's command, "the Royal Order permitted as a successful candidate of the third rank." If this is so, this would seem to belong to the second type of the Notice of Imperial Order. Therefore, the Notice was not directly issued from the State Council to Jang Yang-su, but was issued through the Board of Rites, which was in charge of the civil service examination. However, the original document is in extremely poor condition and a portion of the latter half of the document is missing (or was omitted in the process of transcription).

Again, it is worth noting that the document contains the phrase "Royal Order permitted as" 敕可. According to an epitaph reproduced in the *Compendium of Funerary Inscriptions of the Goryeo Dynasty*,³⁰ Yu Bang-heon 柳邦憲 passed a civil service examination of the Board of Rites 禮部試 as a local candidate (*hyanggong jinsa* 鄉貢進士) and was appointed as Erudite of Literature 攻文博士 by Sanction of Imperial Order 敕可 in the twenty-third year of the reign of King Gwangjong 光宗 (972). At the time Yu was twenty-nine years old. He then held a series of positions (Librarian of the Royal Library 光文校書郎, Senior Librarian of the same Royal Library 光文郎, Chief Secretary of the National Academy 國子主簿, Erudite of the Metropolitan Academy in charge of Popular Instruction 四門博士) before being appointed Assistant Section Chief of the Department of State Affairs 御事右司員外郎 by Sanction of Constitutional Order 制可 in the year of the enthronement of the King Gyeongjong 景宗 (981).

At first glance, the Sanctions of Constitutional or Imperial Order 制可、敕可 bring to mind the Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment during the

²⁹ The original phrases in Classical Chinese are as follows: 右人張良守…/貢院所…/判次點…

³⁰ Gim Yongseon 金龍善, ed. *Goryeo myojimyeong jibseong* 高麗墓誌銘集成 [*Compendium of Funerary Inscriptions of the Goryeo Dynasty*], (Chuncheon: Hallim Daehakkyo chulpanbu, 1997, second edition), pp. 16-18.

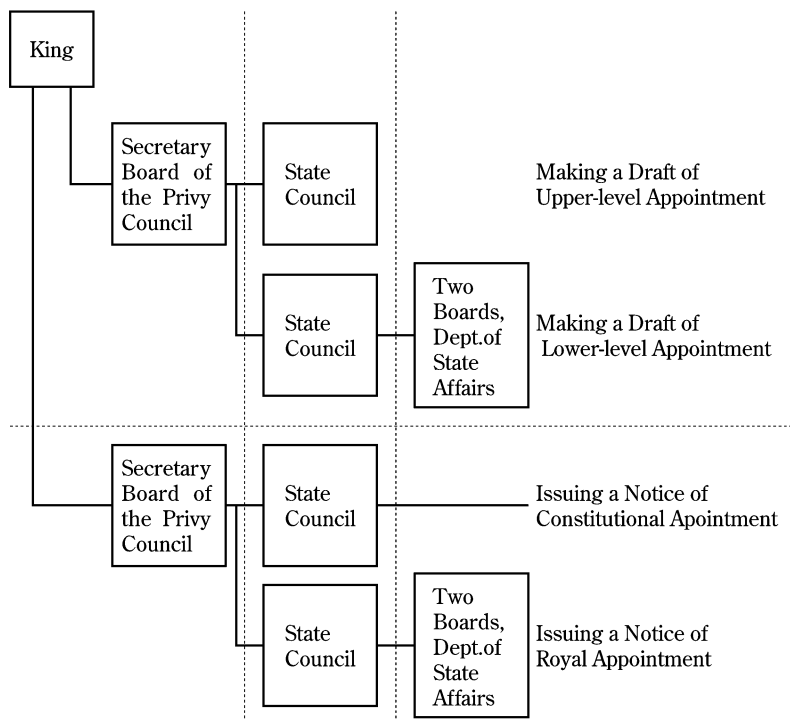
Tang dynasty. However, the position of Assistant Section Chief 員外郎, to which he was appointed by a Sanction of Constitutional Order 制可, was ranked 6a, which meant that he counted among the ranks of the regular participants of court rites. The position of Erudite of Literature 政文博士, to which he was appointed by Sanction of Imperial Order 敕可, put him among the ranks of the lower-level officials (the irregular participants of court rites). Yu's positions clearly do not fall within the range of posts that were appointed through Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment of the Tang administrative system.

If it is the case that the Goryeo court did replace the character “Imperial” with the character “Royal,” it may be that the phrase “Sanction of Constitutional or Imperial Order” designates an appointment by the Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council or the Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel, respectively. Additionally, the Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council contains the phrase “position granted by sanction of Constitutional Order,” 制可某職 and the Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel contains the phrase “position granted by Sanction of Royal Order” 敕可某職.

Therefore in the case of the appointment of Bak Ho 朴浩 (whose letters of gratitude to the throne were cited above) as Second Remonstrator 右拾遺 (rank 6a), which was announced by Notice of Constitutional Appointment from the State Council, the draft plan of appointment was made by the State Councilors on the basis of the information provided by the Board of Civil Personnel. The draft plan ratified by the King was probably sent back to the State Council with the Sanction of Constitutional Order 制可 before it was issued from the State Council in the form of the Notice of Constitutional Appointment 中書門下制牒. The State Council issued the appointment document because it had been based on the State Council's draft plan.

Again, in the case of the appointments of Bak Ho as an Attendant of the Gate of the Inner Court and as Duty Member of Royal Academy of Literature, positions that were confirmed by Notice of Royal Appointment from the Board of Civil Personnel, the proposals for appointment were made by the Board of Civil Personnel. The Board of Civil Personnel supervised the personnel administration of lower-level officials and presented its suggestions through the State Council to the King. Approved by the King, the proposal was returned through the State Council to the Board of Civil Personnel with a Sanction of Royal Order 敕可. At that point, the confirmation was issued from Board of Civil Personnel in the form of the Notice of Royal Appointment 尚書吏部教牒. The Board of Civil Personnel issued the

Fig. 2. Flow of the Orders (type 2)



appointment document, because it had been based on a proposal by the Board of Civil Personnel. (See fig.2.)

One might ask at this point why these orders of appointment were not issued in the form of Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment.

According to the records of the Chinese dynastic chronicle, *A New History of the Five Dynasties*, the cost of materials needed to produce the letters of appointment (red lacquer as dyestuff, papers, and the axis of the scroll) were collected from the appointee before the Board of Personnel made and issued the letters of appointment. The poor who could not bear the expenses often did not receive official letters of appointment. They made do with the Notice of Imperial Appointment 敕牒 as a certificate.³¹ Therefore, the announcement of appointment made by

³¹ A detailed description may be found in *Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史 [A New History of the Five Dynasties], *juan* 55, "The biography of Liu Yue 劉岳," (revised and punctuated edition, Peking: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1974), pp. 631-632.

issuing the Notice of Imperial Appointment began as a temporary expedient. The official Letters of Appointment were to be made later and issued through the Three Departments in the format of the Notification 符. But making the letters of appointment, which were bound as scrolls, proved expensive. In the end, the temporary announcement issued as the Notice of Imperial Appointment became for all intents and purposes the official announcement.

Perhaps the prescribed forms of the Notice of Constitutional or Royal Appointment during the Goryeo dynasty were also introduced from the systems of the late Tang or the Five Dynasties as shown above.

Section 3 Notice of Call to Court

The Notice of Constitutional or Royal Appointment was merely a provisional document that reported the fact of appointment. Even this provisional document, however, was not always issued to all civil and military officials. For example, according to his epitaph that is reproduced in the *Compendium of Funerary Inscriptions of the Goryeo Dynasty*, Wang Hyo 王倬 (the younger brother of King Yejong 睿宗) was appointed by various procedures as follows:

In the twelfth lunar month of the sixth year of King Yejong (1111), [His Majesty] ordered the Department of Chancellery to issue the Letter of Appointment, saying...³²

In the third lunar month of the seventeenth year of King Yejong (1122)...[His Majesty] ordered the Department of Chancellery to issue the Letter of Appointment, saying... Additionally, His Majesty issued the Royal Letter, saying...³³

On the ninth day of the twelfth lunar month of this year (the seventh year of King Injong 仁宗 1129), [His Majesty] bestowed a Royal Comment to appoint him as...³⁴

³² *CFI*, pp. 185-188. 是年十二月、命門下、降官誥曰、...

³³ 三月、命門下、降誥曰...并下教曰、...

³⁴ 是年十二月□九日、下批、爲...

From the first example, we can surmise that he was appointed by a Junior Letter of Appointment 小官詔. From the second example, we can surmise that he was appointed by the Grand Letters of Appointment 大官詔 with an attached Royal Letter. The third example suggests that he was appointed by a Royal Comment 下批. However, the phrase “Royal Comment” does not appear in the format of Letters of Constitutional / Imperial Appointment 制授、敕授告身 or the Notice of Constitutional / Royal Appointment 制牒、教牒. Therefore, appointment by Royal Comment must have been issued through a different procedure from those we have seen before.

Again, according to his epitaph, Kim Sun 金純 was appointed by a Royal Judgment 判 as an unranked officer 隊正 in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Uijong 毅宗 (1160) and was appointed as an officer of the ninth rank 校尉, of the eighth rank 散員, and of the seventh rank 別將 before he was appointed by a Royal Comment 批 as an officer of junior fifth rank 攝中郎將, concurrently holding the post of commander of a military force 領軍 in the fourth year of the reign of King Myeongjong 明宗 (1174).³⁵

We can find many examples of appointment by Royal Comment or Royal Judgment, especially in the records of the later period of the Goryeo dynasty. For instance, in 1308 Yi Hun 李混 and other court aides of the Shenyang Prince 瀋陽王 returned from the Yuan capital of Dadu. They brought with them a plan for governmental restructuring and a list of appointments by Royal Comment and Royal Judgment drafted by the Shenyang Prince³⁶ (or King Chungseon 忠宣王, who at that time seized real power and soon ascended to the throne of Goryeo).

We can find further details of appointment from the Records of the Administrative Career 政案 of Jeong In-gyeong 鄭仁卿 and Yi Ja-su 李子脩.³⁷ These records clearly show that the order of appointment for high officials was issued by Royal Comment 下批, while the written appointment of lower-level officials was issued by Royal Judgment 判.

Royal Comment and Royal Judgment undoubtedly refer to the king's order. Royal Comment and Royal Judgment in theory implied the king's approval of a certain case, not an order by His Majesty's initiative. Thus, Royal Comment and Royal Judgment may be considered royal orders of approval for proposals drafted by the State Council or the Two Boards regarding the personnel changes of upper

³⁵ *CFI*, pp. 283–285.

³⁶ *Goryeo-sa* [Official History of the Goryeo Dynasty], hereafter abbreviated as *GS*, 32:34a

³⁷ *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 70–84, 87–90.

or lower-level officials, respectively. However, the reason why they were not called Constitutional or Imperial / Royal Orders was that only the orders issued through the State Council could be called Constitutional or Imperial / Royal Order. Conversely, we can say that the order of Royal Comment or Royal Judgment was a provisional one that bypassed the State Council. Thus they could not be called Constitutional or Imperial / Royal Order.

In reality, the following descriptions from the *Official History of the Goryeo Dynasty* 高麗史 provide clear evidence that the order of Royal Comment was directly issued to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel, not through the State Council.

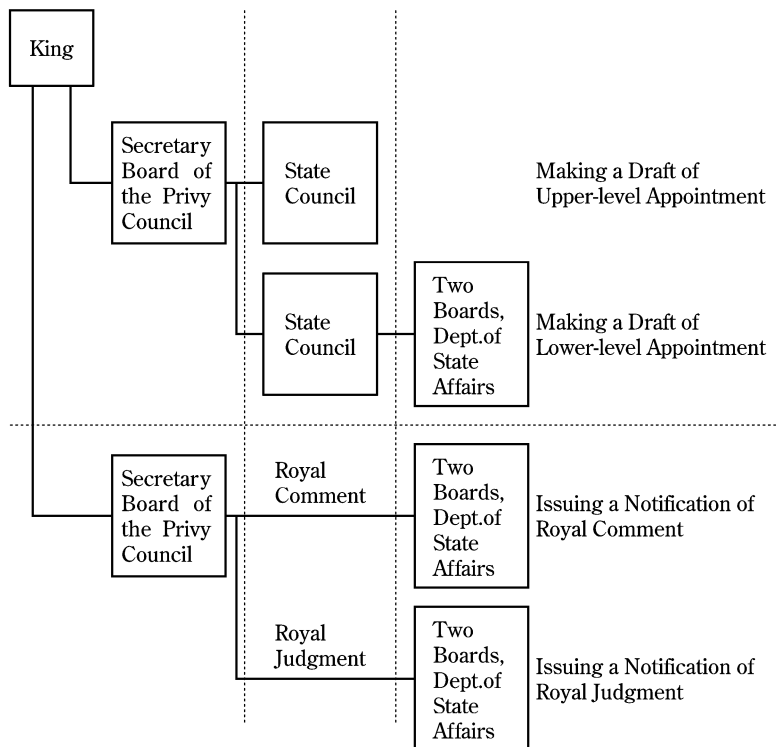
When he appointed officials, King Myeongjong himself selected candidates of the regular participants of court rites, only discussing the matter with his personal favorites and aides at the court. After selecting the officials, he sealed the draft plan and sent it directly to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel. That was called “issuing the Royal Comment” 下批. Receiving the draft plan, the Two Boards merely transcribed it without discussing the plan’s appropriateness. People sought posts and bribes were openly offered, so the wise and foolish were mixed in the government.³⁸

The State Council originally oversaw the drafting of proposals for personnel changes among the upper-level officials. However, King Myeongjong, who came to the throne through the 1170 Rebellion of Military Officers, curtailed the powers of the State Council. In consultation with members of his entourage and court aides, the King compiled lists of potential appointees himself and issued them directly to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel. In this way, the king issued his Royal Comment directly to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel. It seems likely that the king’s Royal Judgment (King’s approval of the Two Boards’ personnel proposals) was also issued directly to the Two Boards.

According to standard procedure at that time, the content of Royal Comment or Royal Judgment should have been reported to the State Council. If it was an important item, the Notice of Constitutional or Royal Appointment would be issued. For less important items, however, the official procedures were skipped, and the order was sent directly to the Two Boards as a Royal Comment or Judgment.

³⁸ GS, 20:18a

Fig. 3. Flow of the Orders (type 3)



ment, without passing through the State Council. (See fig. 3.) It was just an expedient practice for items of minor significance. However, King Myeongjong misused this custom to overstep his authority, and it became a usual practice during the late Goryeo period.

Exactly what procedures were used to issue a Royal Comment or Royal Judgment and what were their specific formats? The Record of the Administrative Career of Jeong In-gyeong 鄭仁卿政案 sheds critical light on two patterns of appointment during the Goryeo period.

- 1) The Warrant of Call to Court 朝謝由 was issued and received, by the Notice of Yi Seung-han, clerk of the Office of Censors, on a certain day of the seventh lunar month of the eleventh year of the reign of Wonjong (1270), regarding the order of Royal Judgment to the proposal of

the Board, issued on a certain day of the seventh month in 1270, transferring Jeong In-gyeong from the Officer of ninth rank under the command of General Baek Hwa to Officer of junior eighth rank under the command of General Hong Sin. Implement [this order].³⁹

2) The Warrant of Call to Court was issued and received, by the Notice of Bak Seon, clerk of the Office of Censors, on a certain day of the second month in 1278, regarding the order of Royal Comment issued on the twenty-fourth day of the second lunar month of the fourth year of the reign of King Chungnyeol (1278), appointing Jeong In-gyeong as Lord of minor fifth rank. Implement [this order].⁴⁰

The first is an appointment by the order of Royal Judgment 判, and the second is by the order of Royal Comment 下批. In the first case, the order was issued after review of a Board's proposal (in this case the Board of Military Personnel). Thus, we can conclude that the order of Royal Judgment meant the king's approval of a proposal by his officials. On the other hand, the order of Royal Comment apparently indicates the king's order issued on his own initiative; there is an empty space preceding the word Comment. Leaving an empty space was a well-established practice to indicate respect for a superior in formal documents in China and Korea. However, in this case it was merely a formality. In reality, the State Council (or court aides and favored members of the king's entourage) had drafted the proposal, which was authorized through the king's Comment. It was then issued as a direct order of the king.

As discussed above, the order of Royal Comment or Royal Judgment was issued directly to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel, without passing through the State Council. But because the State Council had been bypassed, it was not an official order. Thus before the order was issued, it had to go through a verification procedure called Signature and Seal 署經.

³⁹ *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 70-84; 鄭仁卿政案, lines 42-43. The original unabridged passage in Classical Chinese reads as follows: 御史臺令史李承韓、庚午（元宗十一年、一二七〇）七月日名貼、部所奏、庚午七月日、判、將軍洪愼下別將攝教、白和、下校尉鄭仁卿。朝謝由、出納爲等以、施行。

⁴⁰ *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 70-84; 鄭仁卿政案, lines 72-75. The original unabridged passage in Classical Chinese reads as follows: 監察司令史朴宣、戊寅（忠烈王四年、一二七八）二月日名貼、至元十五年（戊寅）二月二十四日、下批、鄭仁卿、爲朝散大夫、貼（賜）紫・金魚袋。朝謝由、出納爲等以、〔施行。〕

The ancestor kings emulated the laws of ancient China when establishing the institutions of mourning. When the country faced increasing difficulties, the Kings provisionally followed the institutions of the Tang and Song Dynasties, and appointed officials before the period of the mourning expired. However the person in mourning was appointed in a very careful way. First, the Board of Rites presented the plan to the king and received His Majesty's approval. Next, the Board of Rites notified the State Council, and the State Council notified the Office of Remonstrators. The Office of Remonstrators then notified the Office of Censors. Finally, the Office of Censors notified the Board of Rites and the Board of Rites issued the order to the appointee to do his duty.⁴¹

The above is the procedures of re-appointing a person who had resigned his office to go into mourning. In this case, the Board of Rites, which oversaw the appointment, first drafted a proposal and then issued it after receiving the King's approval. The order, however, was not official because it had not passed through the State Council. Thus the Board of Rites needed to follow the procedure of sending a notice to the State Council, which in turn notified the Office of Remonstrator, which in turn notified the Office of Censors, and which in turn finally sent a notice to the Board of Rites with approval. Only at this point did the Board of Rites issue the order to the appointee.

This notification of the Office of Censor's approval was called a Notice of Approval 依牒. The procedure of verification concerning the appointment of officials, what was called the Signature and Seal, must have followed the same procedures as described above. However, since in reality the State Councilors drafted the proposals that would later be issued on the authority of the king's Comment, the Office of Remonstrators and Censors, known in the aggregate as the *Dae-gan* 臺諫, administered the key parts of the Signature and Seal verification process.

After completing the verification process, the Office of Censors sent a Notice *cheob* (牒／帖／貼)⁴² of approval to the Board of Civil or Military Personnel. That was the same form of notice from the Office of Censors that appeared above in the Record of the Administrative Career of Jeong In-gyeong. The notice contained a Warrant of Call to Court. Call to Court 朝謝 was an order to report to the palace, receive an official appointment, and then formally express gratitude to the

⁴¹ GS, 115:49a

⁴² 牒 was used for upper-level officials, while 帖／貼 was used for lower-level officials.

king. Warrant 由 here refers to a certification issued from an administrative office. It is the same usage as in a Warrant of Discharge 解由. Thus, the Warrant of Call to Court was a permit to report to the court, to receive an appointment, and to express thanks, issued from the Office of Censors, which oversaw review of officials' misdeeds. After the "issuing and receiving" of the Warrant of Call to Court (that was issued from the Office of Censors and was received by the Two Boards), the Two Boards in charge made and issued a notice to the appointee, saying "Implement [this order]" or "Report to the Court to receive an appointment with thanks." A Record of Administrative Career was nothing more than a register that recorded the contents of such notices of appointment.

Additionally, the word *myeong* 名 (이름 → 이룬, 이룬) in the phrase ~日名貼 means "said" or "issued." The phrase as a whole meant "a notice said / issued on a certain day." The phrase ~爲等以 (한들로) meant "because doing so." Both are examples of *idu* 吏讀, the transcription of native Korean words and names, syllable by syllable, in Chinese characters. The use of *idu* suggests that the document was not an official document of the King, but an abbreviated form of a notice issued from a governmental office.

The document used to issue a Warrant of Call to Court 朝謝由 was called a Notice of Call to Court 朝謝牒 (or 謝牒 for short). It is likely that the Two Boards issued the Notice of Call to Court. The Two Boards, it will be remembered, received Royal Comments and Royal Judgments directly from the king, as was suggested in the above episode of King Myeongjong. So it is natural enough that the Two Boards issued the Notice, which conveyed the order.

Late during Goryeo period, however, the Two Boards did not issue the Notice of Call to Court. Instead, it was issued by the Secretary Board of the Privy Council 樞密院承宣房, which oversaw communication between the king and his officials.

Recently government posts are an admixture of prescribed positions and temporary extra positions.⁴³ But the Notice of Call to Court 謝牒 was issued only with the signature of the Clerk of the Privy Council 堂後官, without a seal on it. I fear that in the future they will certainly be forged. Please order the Board of Civil Personnel and the Board of Military Personnel to issue appointment letters that are affixed with seals and

⁴³ The Goryeo dynasty, in its last years, made many extra positions with no actual duties and salaries to reward feats of arms. They were called *cheomseol-jik* 添設職.

signatures.⁴⁴

As is clearly stated in the passage above, the Notice of Call to Court was issued by a clerk of (the Secretary Board of) the Privy Council, *Danghugwan* 堂後官. We can corroborate this fact through two “Letters of Appointment for Yi Ja-su” 李子脩, which are dated the second year and fifteenth years of King Sin U 辛禡 (1376 and 1382).

The Warrant of Call to Court was issued and received, by the Notice of An Cheon-su, Chief Clerk of the Office of Censors, on a certain day of the tenth lunar month in the ninth year of the Hongwu reign (1376), regarding the order of Royal Comment issued on the twelfth day of the tenth lunar month of the Hongwu reign (1376), appointing Yi Ja-su as Lord of the major third rank, Director of the Astronomical Observatory. Implement [this order]. Seal. All has been collated.

Temporary Clerk. Clerk of Privy Council (Signature).⁴⁵

Collated copy of Warrant of Call to Court kept in the office:

The Warrant of Call to Court was issued and received, by the Notice of Choe Ja-un, Chief Clerk of the Office of Censors, on a certain day of the eleventh lunar month of the fifteenth year of the Hongwu reign (1382), regarding the order of Royal Comment issued on the twenty-fifth day of the third lunar month in the fifteenth year of the Hongwu reign (1382), appointing Yi Ja-su as Lord of major third rank, Supreme Director of the Office of Rituals. Implement [this order]. Seal. All has been collated.

(Signature) (Signature)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ GS, 115:40b

⁴⁵ *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 93-94, 李子脩洪武九年朝謝牒. The original text in Classical Chinese follows below:

司憲府錄事 安天壽 洪武九年十月日名帖、洪武九年七月十二日、下 批、李子脩爲奉順大夫・判書雲觀事、朝謝由、出納爲等〔以〕、施行。印。唱／準權知 堂後官 押

⁴⁶ *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 95-96, 李子脩洪武十五年朝謝牒. The original passage in Classical Chinese appears below.

司上朝謝斜準
司憲府錄事崔子雲 洪武十五年十一月 日名帖、洪武十五年三月廿五日、下 批、李子脩爲通憲大夫・判典儀寺事、朝謝由、出納爲等以、施行。印。唱／準
(手訣)押 (手訣)押

The above records are copies of original documents that were issued to Yi Ja-su, ancestor of the famous literatus Yi Hwang 李滉 (Toegye 退溪) of the Joseon dynasty. The originals, however, have not survived. The two documents have nearly identical formats, but the former lacks a title. It is entitled “Letter of Appointment” 告身 in the still extant *Jinbo Yi Genealogy* 眞寶李氏世譜, in which the original was transcribed. Strictly speaking, however, it is not a Letter of Appointment.

In contrast, the latter document is entitled “Collated copy of Warrant of Call to Court kept in the office” 司上朝謝斜準 and is likely an original. *Sasang* 司上 means “kept in preparation in an office.” *Sa* 斜 means an official warrant 斜只. Finally, *jun* 準 means “collated.” Thus, *sasang josa sajun* 司上朝謝斜準 means a collated copy of a Warrant of Call to Court 朝謝 that was kept [for reference/on record] in a given office. Therefore, the above documents were not Letters of Appointment in a strict sense. They were just copies of Warrants of Call to Court.

We must now turn to the office that issued the documents. The title of *Danghugwan* 堂後官 clearly indicates that they were issued from the Privy Council. In the administrative system of the Chinese Song dynasty, *Danghugwan* (or *Tanghouguan* in Chinese) referred to one of the clerks of the State Council. However, in the Goryeo dynasty, *Danghugwan* was subordinate to the Privy Council, not to the State Council. It was a civil position of the major seventh rank, and it controlled the flow of documents that were submitted to or issued from the Privy Council. Two men were to hold the post of *Danghugwan*, so the two signatures in the above document of 1382 must have been the signatures of *Danghugwan*, the clerks of the Privy Council.

In the document from 1376, however, there is only one signature of a clerk of the Privy Council. The other person who should have signed the document, designated here by the term *Gwonji* 權知, may have been a junior person with insufficient seniority who filled the vacancy as temporary clerk. If this is the case, however, the position of *Gwonji* should have been subordinate to the position of *Danghugwan* in rank. Thus, it is strange that the signature of *Gwonji* should appear above that of *Danghugwan*. Perhaps the two titles were originally arranged horizontally, from the lesser position to the higher one, but were rearranged into a vertical format when they were later transcribed.

Additionally, the word “seal” 印 at the end of the document should have indicated where the official seal was to be affixed. However, as documents from later periods show, it was often simply a marker to designate the conclusion of the document. Thus in *idu* 吏讀, it is read as *ggeut* 𪛗 or “the end.” The phrase “All

has been collated” (literally “chant aloud/collate”) 唱／準 comes from a procedure of collation whereby one person read the text aloud and another collated it against the original text. Under the phrase of “All has been collated,” there might have originally been some notation of the position and surname of the minor clerks who supervised the preparation of the document.⁴⁷

In any case, these Letters of Appointment for Yi Ja-su had signatures of the officials of the issuing office and can be regarded as a copy of the original document that had been issued to the appointee. The signatures were those of *Dang-hugwan*, the Clerks of the Privy Council, so the issuing office of the document was undoubtedly the Privy Council.

Still, why was the Notice of Call to Court issued from the Privy Council, not from the Two Boards? To understand this point, we must first quickly review the formation of the Personnel Authority (*jeong-bang* 政房) during the period of Military Dictatorship and the changes in the personnel administration system that it entailed.

Section 4 Formation of the Personnel Authority

As noted above, State Councilors had a certain authority in appointing upper-level officials, that is officials of the fifth rank and above with the exceptions of some lower-rank officials.⁴⁸ However, they faced severe challenges from members of the king's entourage and court aides, who as we have seen, were involved in the arbitrary issuing of Royal Comments of King Myeongjong 明宗 during the early period of the Military Dictatorship. In a sense this may be said to have heralded the establishment of the Personnel Authority 政房. The Personnel Authority, established by the elder and junior Choes (Choe Chung-heon 崔忠獻 and Choe Yi 崔怡), would completely strip the State Council and Two Boards of their authority in the personnel administration of upper and lower level officials.

Many scholars have examined the Personnel Authority, and recently Gim Chang-hyeon 金昌賢 has published an excellent monograph entitled *A Study of the*

⁴⁷ We can find a seal stamped on the signatures of clerks who were in charge of collation in the following document. It suggests the original form of “印、唱／準.” See *Han'guk godae jungse gomunseo yeongu*, volume one, pp. 373-403. 修禪社形止案.

⁴⁸ These exceptions included the Associate Section Chief of the major sixth rank in the Department of State Affairs 員外郎, Censors of junior sixth rank in the Office of Censors 監察御史, Remonstrators of senior and junior sixth rank 司諫、正言, and so on.

Personnel Authority during the late Goryeo Period 高麗後期政房研究.⁴⁹ However, my understanding of the appointment of regular participants of court rites, which was under the authority of State Councilors, differs substantially from earlier scholarship. Below, I re-examine the formation of the Personnel Authority with a special focus on how it changed the system of personnel administration and letters of appointment of the early Goryeo period.

The beginning of Personnel Authority can be traced back to when Choe Chung-heon held offices on both the Board of Civil and Board of Military Personnel and monopolized the authority of appointment for the lower-level officials.

He held the additional post of Chief Director of the Board of Civil Personnel, concurrently with the post of Chief Director of the Board of Military Personnel. Thus in the morning he went to the Board of Military Personnel; in the afternoon, he went to the Board of Civil Personnel. In this way, he appointed all officials of the civil and military services.⁵⁰

Choe Chung-heon, the Chief Secretary of Privy Council, held an additional post of Chief Director of the Board of Civil Personnel, concurrently with the post of Chief Director of the Board of Military Personnel. He took charge of the appointment of all lower level officials of the civil and military services. He frequently attended the court, and he was always accompanied by armed guards.⁵¹

As noted in the passages above, Choe Chung-heon participated in the administrative evaluation process in the Two Boards of Civil and Military Personnel, and concurrently held the post of the Chief Secretary of the Privy Council, which controlled the flow of royal orders. However, the Two Boards compiled the list of prospective appointments only for lower-level officials. Thus until he was appointed State Councilor, he could not officially take part in the appointment of the higher-level officials, which was the purview of the State Council.

⁴⁹ Gim Chang-hyeon 金昌賢, *Goreyo hugi jeong-bang yeon-gu* [A Study of the Personnel Authority during the late Goryeo Period] 高麗後期政房研究 (Seoul: Goryeo Daehakkyo Minsok Munhwa Yeonguwon 高麗大學校民族文化研究院, 1998).

⁵⁰ GS, 129:13a

⁵¹ *Goryeo-sa jeolyo* [Concise History of the Goryeo Dynasty], hereafter abbreviated as GSJY, 14:5a. (a facsimile edition, Gakushū-in Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūsho 學習院大學東洋文化研究所, 1960)

Next in 1202, Choe made a list of appointments at his private residence, not at the office of the Two Boards, in order to save the trouble of going back and forth between the Two Boards.

Choe Chung-heon made a list of appointments at his residence for the first time, consulting only No Wan, a court aide who currently held the position of Associate Section Chief of the Board of Civil Personnel. When he had presented the list to the King, His Majesty merely gave an affirmative nod. The Supreme Directors of the Two Boards merely reviewed it at the hall of State Council without discussion.⁵²

Choe made a list of appointments at his private residence, consulting only his cronies and effectively excluding his colleagues of the Two Boards from the process of personnel appointment. Supreme Directors of the Two Boards, which positions the Chief and Second State Councilors held as routine duties, could do nothing but follow Choe's directions.

It was not only the appointment list of the lower-level officials that Choe compiled in his residence. He also drafted the appointment list of upper-level officials. Originally the State Councilors should have performed this function. However, as noted above, their authority was gradually usurped by the royal aides in court, including Choe. Thus, Choe could compile an appointment list of upper-level officials by himself and implement it using the name and authority of the King.

However, he could not manage the enormous business of appointment alone. Some literati, friends, and court aides such as No Wan, who currently held the position of Associate Section Chief of the Board of Civil Personnel, assisted Choe as his private bureaucracy. This is the origin of the Personnel Authority.

Choe submitted the appointment lists directly to the king, taking advantage of his position as Chief Secretary of the Privy Council. After receiving a royal order of Comment or Judgment, the appointment lists were sent to the Two Boards to be put into practice, thus bypassing the State Council. In such a way, the making of the appointment lists of both of the upper and lower-level officials fell beyond the reach of officials of the State Council and the Two Boards. No one could take part in the business of personnel administration without joining Choe's party at his residence.

Of course, the Two Boards were still in charge of the basic business of per-

⁵² GS, 129:14a-b; GS/Y, 14:10b

sonnel administration, such as compiling and handling the Records of Official Career and issuing the Notice of Call to Court. However, control over the appointments themselves was in the hands of Choe Chung-heon and his party.

Later, Choe was promoted to the State Council as Associate State Councilor 參知政事, concurrently holding the post of the Chief Director of the Two Boards and the office of Supreme Director of the Office of Censors. In the sixth year of the reign of King Sin-jong (1203), he was promoted to Vice-Director of the Department of Secretariat, State Councilor, while holding the post of Chief Director of the Board of Civil Personnel concurrently.⁵³ Thus despite his promotion to State Councilor, Choe never abandoned his position of the Board of Civil Personnel. Now, as a State Councilor, he held complete authority over personnel administration of upper-level officials, while as Chief Director of the Board of Civil Personnel, he oversaw the appointment of lower-level officials. Thus, he held sway over the personnel administration of the entire dynasty. All official positions of the State had become appointments proposed in Choe's private residence by his private bureaucracy.

Choe's son, Choe Yi 崔怡, succeeded to the system of personnel administration begun by his father and controlled from the Choes' private residence. In the eighth year of the reign of King Gojong (1221), Choe Yi was appointed Associate State Councilor 參知政事, concurrently holding the post of the Chief Director of the Two Boards and the office of Supreme Director of the Office of Censors. He thus monopolized authority over the personnel administration. It was in this context that he came to establish the Personnel Authority in his private residence.

In the twentieth year of the reign of King Gojong (1225), the officials reported to the Choe Yi's residence and presented their Records of Official Career to him. Sitting arrogantly, Choe Yi accepted them. The lower-level officials from the sixth rank and below bowed to him twice in the front yard of the hall. They lay on their faces and they never looked up at his face. Thus he established the Personnel Authority in his private residence and selected literati to serve there....He made a draft plan of appointment of officials and presented a List of Appointment by Royal Comment 批目 to the King. His Majesty simply approved and issued it [without comment or discussion].⁵⁴

⁵³ GS, 129:15b; GS/Y, 14:15a

⁵⁴ GS, 129:31b; GS/Y, 15:34b.

The lower-level officials from the sixth rank and below took such a servile attitude, because the Two Boards effectively controlled the appointment of them. The King had merely assented to its proposal through issuing the order of Judgment. In other words, Choe Yi determined the lower-level officials' appointment and dismissal.

On the other hand, in theory the king, through the issue of his Royal Comment, determined the appointment list of upper-level officials. In reality, however, it was determined on the suggestion of the State Councilors, or the favorites and aides in the court. The List of Appointment by Royal Comment 批目 noted above referred to the list of determined appointments, or the draft plan of it. Choe Yi had stripped the authority to draw up these lists from fellow members of the State Council and from the king's favorites and aides in court. Whereas previously King Myeongjong himself, with the aid of his favorites and aides in court, had issued such appointment lists, Choe Yi had reduced King Gojong to nothing more than a puppet who merely confirmed after the fact appointment lists already determined by him.

Thus, through their control over the power of appointment, Choe Chung-heon and Choe Yi established the Personnel Authority. Below, I examine the impact of the Personnel Authority on the system of Letters of Appointment.

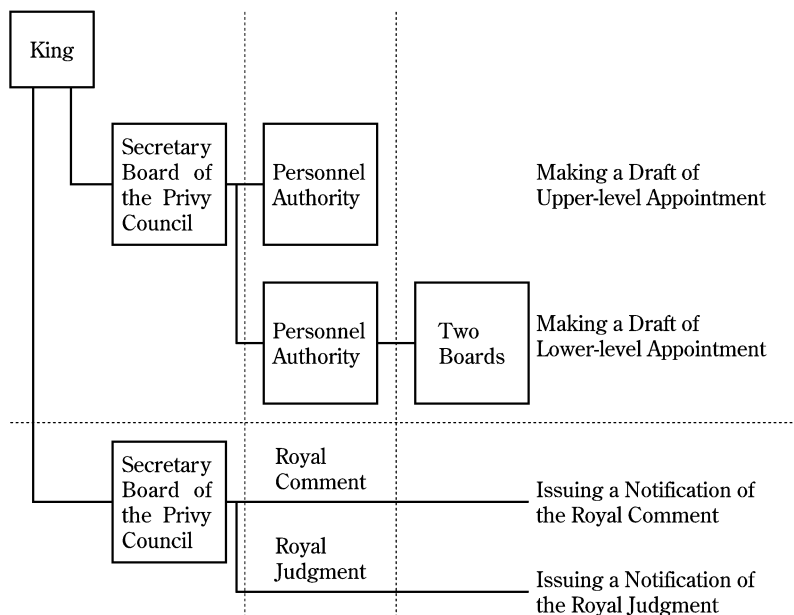
The order of Royal Comment, whether it was made on the suggestion of the State Councilors, the king's favorites and court aides, or the staff of the Personnel Authority in the Choes' residence, was issued as an order that represented the king's informal intentions.

However, if the order did not go through the State Council, it could not be regarded as the king's formal intentions. Therefore, if necessary, the king ordered the State Council to take a prescribed procedure of making a Letter of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment (i.e. the Grand or Junior Letter of Appointment) which represented the king's formal intentions.

Alternatively, the king ordered the State Council or the Board of Civil Personnel to issue the Notice of Constitutional or Royal Appointment, respectively, which also represented the king's formal intentions. Lastly, if it was a less important item, the king sent it directly to the Two Boards to issue the Notice of Call to Court, which simply represented the king's informal intentions.

These procedures do not seem to have changed at all as a result of the establishment of Personnel Authority. However, when the order of Royal Comment or Royal Judgment was issued directly in the abbreviated format, the officials in charge became the Clerks of the Privy Council rather than the Two Boards.

Fig. 4. Flow of the Orders (type 4)



(See fig.4.)

The Two Board's loss of power over personnel appointment after the establishment of the Personnel Authority is probably linked closely to the fact it had become nothing more than a repository for such basic personnel materials as the Records of Official Career. The Personnel Authority determined the contents of the orders of Royal Comment and Royal Judgment. Thus it would have been natural that the notice of appointment be issued from the Personnel Authority. The Personnel Authority, however, was not an official administrative organization, but rather a private staff housed in the Choe residence. The Secretaries of the Privy Council, who presided over communications between the King and the officials, took over the affairs of the Personnel Authority. This explains why the Clerks under the direction of the Secretaries of the Privy Council made and issued the Notice of Call to Court. It also explains why one of the Secretaries of Privy Council always took part in the personnel administration in the Personnel Authority as a Secretary of the Privy Council in Charge of Personnel 政色承宣.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ GS, 75:3a.

It is worth noting that while the Choes had established the Personnel Authority, the Personnel Authority did not disappear after the collapse of the Choe Military Dictatorship. Instead the Personnel Authority was relocated into the royal palace, next to the king's daily residence, where it survived as a *de facto* state bureau.⁵⁶ In other words, the king now oversaw the Personnel Authority and presided over the personnel administration with his private staff, not with the officials of the Two Boards.

Of course even before the establishment of Personnel Authority, the King had in theory presided over the personnel administration of civil and military officials. However, in fact the State Councilors and the Two Boards had drawn up the appointment lists of upper and lower-level officials. Thus with the exception of the highest-ranking officials (those of the third rank and above, whose appointment fell under the purview of Royal Prerogative), the appointment or dismissal of officials did not necessarily reflect directly the king's personal wishes. The overuse of the order of Royal Comment during the reign of King Myeongjong created a precedent for arbitrary appointment by the king, powerful ministers, or royal favorites who relied on the sovereign's authority. The despotic tone of the period led to the concentration of all power in the hands of the elder and junior Choes, who established the irregular system of the Personnel Authority.

When the Personnel Authority was relocated to the royal place, in a matter of speaking it became an official personnel organization under the direction of King himself. This suggests that such an irregular system of personnel perfectly matched the despotic tenor of the late Goryeo period.

Once recognized as a formal personnel authority of the state, the Personnel Authority would never be abolished, despite repeated efforts at reform in the name of the restoration of the "institutions of the dynastic ancestors."

For example in the second year of the reign of King Chungseon 忠宣王 (1310), the king turned responsibility for the appointment for civil and military officials over to the Two Boards and ordered the Prime and Second State Councilors to preside over it.⁵⁷ To put the matter more clearly, this was an attempt to revive an older system whereby the Two Boards, in consultation with the Prime and Second State Councilors who concurrently held the office of Supreme Director of the Two Boards, compiled the appointment list for the lower-level officials, and the Prime and Second State Councilors, in consultation with other State Council-

⁵⁶ GS, 105:1a; GSJY, 17:43a-b.

⁵⁷ GS, 75:4a.

ors, made the appointment list for the upper-level officials.

However in reality, using the king's authority, a few favorite aides monopolized the authority of appointment by holding the office of the Two Boards concurrently with other offices. As a result, the Prime and Second State Councilors had no effective say in the personnel administration, and the business of personnel administration was dominated by the king's favorites. For example, in the fourth year of the reign of King Chungseon (1312), the king ordered Gwon Bu 權溥, the Supreme Director of the Board of Military Personnel, to make an appointment list for lower level military officials (from the seventh rank and below).⁵⁸ Similarly, in the first year of the reign of King Chungsuk 忠肅王 (1314), his father King Chungseon ordered Sin Cheon 辛葦 and An Gyu 安珪, Section Chief and Associate Section Chief of the Board of Civil Personnel, respectively, to draw up an appointment list (for the lower-level officials, perhaps) for civil service posts.⁵⁹ Gwon, Sin, and An were men who enjoyed the particular favor of the king and who monopolized the authority of personnel administration. Therefore, efforts at reform were defeated. In the seventh year of the reign of King Chungsuk (1320), just ten years after its abolishment, the Personnel Authority was restored.⁶⁰

In the eleventh lunar month of the year King Chungmok 忠穆王 came to the throne (1344), he ordered the Two Boards to select candidates for posts of the "fifth rank and below" and present the list to the throne.⁶¹ This process of selecting and reporting was called *jeon-ju* 點奏; each official of the Two Boards recommended the candidates and selected a certain person by vote before reporting to the King.⁶² Based on the lists put forward by the Two Boards, the king would then issue an order of Royal Comment confirming posts of the fifth and sixth ranks and issue an order of Royal Judgment confirming posts of the seventh rank and below.

In this case, the category "the fifth rank and below" was equivalent to the mid- and lower level posts graded as "the sixth rank and below" according to the early Goryeo system of bureaucratic rankings.⁶³ Thus, it was an effort to restore the system of personnel administration in which the Two Boards drew up the

⁵⁸ GSJY, 23:30a.

⁵⁹ GSJY, 24:4a.

⁶⁰ GS, 75:4a; GSJY, 24:17b.

⁶¹ GS, 75:4a.

⁶² GS, 75:1a-b; GSJY, 12:37a-b.

⁶³ Yagi Takeshi 矢木毅, "Kôrai Eisôchô ni okeru Ishikettei no Kôzô," 高麗睿宗朝における意思決定の構造, *Shirin* [Journal of Historical researches], 史林 76-2 (1993): p. 133.

appointment lists for the lower-level officials. One month after the king proclaimed the order noted above, the Personnel Authority was officially abolished, and the personnel administration of the officials (of the lower-level, perhaps) was turned over to the Two Boards. It seems likely that in consultation with other State Councilors, the Prime and Second State Councilors (who concurrently held the office of Supreme Director of the Two Boards) took charge of appointing upper-level officials. However, the reform did not last; the very next year (1345), Personnel Authority was restored.⁶⁴

In the first year of his reign (1352), King Gongmin 恭愍王 (1352), eager to reform dynastic administration, made a clear promise to abolish the Personnel Authority.⁶⁵ In the fifth year of his reign (1356), the king issued a Royal Order expressing his strong intention to abolish the Personnel Authority.

The powerful minister Choe established the Personnel Authority. How can we say it was in accordance with the proper practice of appointing a person openly in Court? From this day forward, it should be permanently abolished. In regard to officials of the third rank and below, I will consult with the State Councilors about their appointment and dismissal. In regard to officials of the seventh rank and below, the Boards of Civil and Military Personnel will draft lists of appointment and present them to me.⁶⁶

The contents of this Royal Order merit close attention because they detail how appointments were to be made after the abolishment of the Personnel Authority. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Royal Order, the king was to directly appoint officials of the second rank and above. Regardless of whether the Personnel Authority was in place or not, the appointment of the highest officials had always constituted one of the king's most critical prerogatives. Further, the stratum of "the second rank and above" during the late Goryeo period corresponded to that of "the third rank and above" in the bureaucratic ranking system of the early Goryeo period, whose appointment had been a royal prerogative.

Secondly, in consultation with the State Councilors, the king was to appoint officials of "the third rank and below." The stratum of "the third rank and below"

⁶⁴ GS, 37:7a, 75:4a.

⁶⁵ GS, 75:4b; GS/Y, 26-9b.

⁶⁶ GS, 75:5b-6a.

corresponded to “the fourth rank and below” of the early Goryeo period. This suggests that early during the Goryeo dynasty, the State Councilors had in fact appointed the officials of “the fourth rank and below,” or the regular participants of court rites.

Lastly, the Two Boards were to appoint the officials of “the seventh rank and below.” The stratum of “the seventh rank and below” corresponded to “the sixth rank and below” of the early Goryeo period, i.e., the irregular participants of court rites. This would suggest an effort to restore institutions of an earlier time when the Two Boards in effect appointed lower-level officials.

Therefore, the abolishment of the Personnel Authority in 1356, as well as other reforms made this year, strongly suggest that King Gongmin wished to restore the “old institutions of the reign of King Munjong 文宗” of the early Goryeo period. Following this Royal Order of King Gongmin, the Two Boards again took charge of the personnel administration (presumably for lower-level officials).⁶⁷ The reform, however, proved to be of short duration. Under the new name “Chamber of Memorandums” 筓子房, the Personnel Authority was restored shortly later.

In the first year of the reign of King Sin U (1375), the Office of Censors requested that the Chamber of Memorandum be abolished and that the Two Boards split responsibility for the personnel administration (probably for the lower-level officials). Although the King approved the request, there is no evidence that the plan was ever implemented.⁶⁸ In fact, the Personnel Authority continued to function during the reign of King Sin U. Powerful ministers and royal favorites often held the post of Supervisor of Personnel Authority 提調政房 (generally concurrently with other offices) and monopolized authority over personnel administration. Overwhelmed by these powerful ministers and royal favorites, Prime and Second State Councilors (who were in charge of the Supervisor of the Personnel Authority as routine duties in those days) were unable to exercise the influence over the personnel administration that they should have.⁶⁹

Thus, although the Personnel Authority was repeatedly abolished, each time it was completely restored. As noted briefly above, that was because the Personnel Authority was a product of the fundamentally despotic character of the late Goryeo period.

The Personnel Authority proved extremely congenial to the king (and to

⁶⁷ GS, 75:6a; GSJY, 26:46b.

⁶⁸ GS, 75:6b; GSJY, 30:10a.

⁶⁹ GSJY, 30:17b.

GSJY, 32:5a-b.

powerful ministers and royal favorites at court). This is clear from the following words of Jo Il-sin 趙日新, a powerful minister at King Gongmin's court, who requested the re-establishment of the system of Personnel Authority after it had been temporarily abolished at the beginning of King Gongmin's reign.

Many powerful ministers and court favorites from the Mongol Yuan dynasty who wish to have their kinsmen appointed to official posts have already petitioned Your Majesty. They have also requested the same of me. At present, however, Your Majesty has ordered the Boards of Civil and Military Personnel to oversee personnel administration. I fear that the business of personnel administration would suffer many delays if they were in charge, because they rigidly adhere to the letter of the law. Thus, I ask that the Personnel Authority be re-established and the appointment lists be made and issued from the Court.⁷⁰

As the words of Jo Il-sin show, the appointment (of lower-level officials, perhaps) under the Two Boards tended to be inflexible because they stuck to the official procedures of personnel administration. It was far more convenient for the king (and for powerful ministers and royal favorites aides), who wished to expand royal authority, to establish in the palace the Personnel Authority, which was directly subordinate to the king and which was free from bureaucratic interference, thus leaving the business of personnel administration in the hands of a few powerful ministers and royal favorites, men selected by the king.

Therefore the Personnel Authority would not be abolished until the despotic character of the times changed. It had begun as a private administrative organ of the Military Dictatorship of the Choe family. However, it outlived not only the Choe Dictatorship but the Goryeo dynasty itself. As kings of the late Goryeo struggled to overcome both foreign and domestic challenges, the period grew increasingly despotic. It was not until the fifth year of King Taejong 太宗 of the new Joseon dynasty (1405), that the Personnel Authority was finally abolished.

⁷⁰ GS, 131:4b-5a; GS/Y, 26:11b-12a.

Concluding Remarks

Prospects for the System of Personnel Administration during the Joseon Dynasty

After the Goryeo dynasty had surrendered to the Mongol Empire, the Departments of Secretariat and Chancellery were consolidated into a new Department of Chancellery (僉議府, later renamed 都僉議司 or 門下府), to which the Department of State Affairs was annexed. The new State Council was composed of the upper directors of the Department of Chancellery.

Because it had been based on the previous administrative system of the Three Departments, Letters of Constitutional or Imperial Appointment (i.e. Grand or Junior Letters of Appointment) could no longer function in the same way. Instead they were replaced by Royal Letters of Appointment (*gwangyo* 官敎), which were issued according to the King's Instruction (*wangji* 王旨). In the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty* appears the following explanation.

The King revised the format of the Letters of Appointment. Officials of the first to fourth rank were appointed by the King's Instructions; the Written Appointments were called Royal Letters of Appointment.⁷¹

However, prior to that in 1392, when Yi Bang-won 李芳遠 (who would later reign as King Taejong 太宗 of the Joseon dynasty) was appointed Academician of the Privy Council 密直提學, his father Yi Seong-gye 李成桂 (i.e. the founder of the Joseon dynasty) was said to have ordered his aides to read aloud the Royal Letter of Appointment again and again, listening to it with joy. Therefore, during the late Goryeo period, the new system had already been implemented.⁷²

Perhaps the system of Royal Letters of Appointment was adopted as a replacement for the abolished system of Grand or Junior letters of Appointment after the Goryeo dynasty had surrendered to the Mongol Empire. It seems likely that the name Royal Letter of Appointment *gwan-gyo* 官敎 derived from the former term *gwan-go* 官誥. The court changed the character *go* 誥 to *gyo* 敎.

⁷¹ *Joseon Wangjo Sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [*Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty*], hereafter abbreviated as *JSSL* Taejo 2:10b. (a facsimile edition, Seoul: Guksa Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe 國史編纂委員會, 1955-58).

⁷² *Yongbi-eocheon-ga* 龍飛御天歌 [*Song of Dragons Flying in Heaven*] (a facsimile edition, Seoul: Asea Munhwasa 亞細亞文化社, 1973), 9:32b-33a.

In the administrative system of the Yuan Mongol Empire, upper-level officials from the first to fifth ranks (which belonged to the category of Lords), were appointed by direct imperial order, the Imperial Instruction 宣命.⁷³ The Written Appointment conveying the Imperial Instruction was authorized only by the Emperor's Seal and did not bear the signatures of State Councilors.⁷⁴ In the same way, the Royal Letters of Appointment were authorized only by the King's Seal and did not bear the signatures of the State Councilors. Thus, it seems probable that the Goryeo system of Royal Letters of Appointment was adopted from the system of the Imperial Instruction of the Mongol Empire.

The same passage of the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty* noted above provides the rest of the explanation.

Officials from the fifth to ninth ranks were appointed through the Department of Chancellery, which received the order of the King. The Written Appointment was called a Notice of Royal Appointment 敕牒.⁷⁵

In the bureaucratic system of the Mongol Yuan Empire, officials from the sixth to ninth ranks were appointed on the basis of a draft plan compiled by the State Councilors, and the Written Appointment (or Notice of Imperial Appointment 敕牒) was issued with the signatures of the State Councilors.⁷⁶ Thus, the Goryeo dynasty also adopted the system of the Notice of Imperial Appointment and called it the Notice of Royal Appointment, changing the character Imperial 敕 to the character Royal 敕.

Therefore, the system of the Royal Letters of Appointment or the Notice of Royal Appointment did not appear ex nihilo in the first year of the Joseon dynasty in 1392. Rather it represented adjustments to an existing system. Concretely speaking, the Royal Letters of Appointment (which had been issued in appointing State or Privy Councilors) were now issued in appointing officials of the fourth rank and above. The Notice of Royal Appointment, which had been issued from the Privy Council, was now issued from the Department of Chancellery.

In fact, the Personnel Authority (which was called the Office of Royal Seals at

⁷³ "Monograph on Recruitment," *Yuan shi* 元史 [Official History of the Yuan Dynasty], (revised and punctuated edition, Peking: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1976), *juan* 83, p. 2064.

⁷⁴ *Li xue zhi nan* 吏學指南 [Guidance for the Chancellery] (Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe 文海出版社, 1979), p. 20.

⁷⁵ *JSSL*, Taejo 2:10b.

⁷⁶ *Li xue zhi nan* [Guidance for the Chancellery], p. 20.

the time) still oversaw personnel administration. Thus, the Personnel Authority was to compile the appointment list for officials of the fourth rank and above before the king issued a Royal Comment and sent it to the Department of Chancellery, which made and issued the Royal Letters of Appointment. The Personnel Authority also created appointment lists for officials of the fifth rank and below before the king gave an order of Royal Comment regarding officials of the fifth to sixth ranks, or an order of Royal Judgment regarding officials of the seventh rank and below. These orders were sent to the Department of Chancellery, and the Department of Chancellery made a Notice of Royal Appointment after reporting to the Office of Censors and receiving its verification (or Signatures and Seals 署經).

Therefore, this reform was intended to ensure that officials from the fourth rank and above were appointed by the Direct Appointment of the king, thus bypassing the Office of Censor's verification. In other words, the despotic power of the king was strengthened even beyond that of the Goryeo dynasty. The range of officials who received Royal Letters of Appointment subsequently underwent a complicated series of changes,⁷⁷ but in the end, as the *Great Code of Administration* 經國大典 indicates, the court decided on officials "from the fourth rank and above."

Additionally, when in 1405 the Personnel Authority was abolished, its duties fell to the Two Boards of Civil and Military Personnel. Thus, upper-level officials, previously appointed by the State Councilors, were now also subject to the Two Boards' authority. At that time too, the old custom that the Prime and Second State Councilors concurrently hold the office of the Supreme Directors of the Two Boards was abolished. In the bureaucratic reforms of that year, administrative authorities of the State Councilors were much reduced, and many of them were transferred to the Six Boards 六曹.⁷⁸ These changes also indicate the suppression of the State Councilors' powers and the reinforcement of the king's despotic power.

The appointment of officials by Direct Appointment of the King had originally been limited to the officials of the second rank and above, which corresponded to the category of the Grand Lords of ancient China, or Officials in the Hall 堂上官. They were now to be selected from three candidates nominated by the Two Boards.

⁷⁷ Choe Seung-hui 崔承熙, *Joseon Chogi Eongwan Eollon Yeongu* 朝鮮初期言官・言論研究 (Seoul: Seoul Daehakkyo Chulpanbu, 1976), pp. 52-60.

⁷⁸ JSSL, Taejong 9:1b-2a

When a person was to be appointed in a certain position, the board in charge wrote the names of three candidates to be selected, and presented it to the King. The King drew a circle above the name of the one to be appointed. This procedure was called “receiving a mark” and was used in appointing officials of “the second rank and above.”⁷⁹

As noted in the passage above, appointments by “receiving a mark” had originally been limited to officials from the second rank and above, or the Officials in the Hall. Therefore, in the main the Two Boards appointed the officials of the third rank and below (although the third and fourth rank fell under the category of Direct Appointment of the king in formality). Officials directly nominated by the king among officials from the third rank and below were to be noted as selected by Special Instruction 特旨.⁸⁰ However, this would suggest that normally the Two Boards appointed officials of the third rank and below. On the other hand, officials of the second rank and above should have been selected by Special Instruction. Thus they did not need to be especially designated so.

However, with the consolidation of the sovereign’s power, the range of positions by “receiving a mark” steadily grew. For instance, according to a 1437 entry of the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty*, some members of the Office of Censors and the Office of Remonstrators were appointed by “receiving a mark.” Similarly, information related to the administrative careers and characters of many officials was submitted on a monthly basis to the king who selected by his mark men to fill such offices as Mentors of the Prince, Supreme Directors of the general offices, Academicians and Duty Scholars of the Academy of Literature, Secretary and Auditor of the State Council, Section Chiefs of the Six Boards and the City Hall, Concurrent Directors and Section Chiefs of the Board of Punishment and the Section of Slaves, Major and Minor Chief Clerks of Privy Council, Clerk of the Office of Royal Relatives, and general officials from “fourth rank and above.”⁸¹

Thus officials of the fourth rank and above, and elite officials of the sixth rank and above were almost entirely appointed by “receiving a mark” from the king. On the other hand, officials of the fifth and sixth rank of general offices were formally appointed by the order of Royal Comment, which was in reality based on the draft plan made by the Two Boards. Lower-level officials were appointed by the order

⁷⁹ *JSSL*, Sejong 1:13b

⁸⁰ *JSSL*, Sejong 78:17a

⁸¹ *JSSL*, Sejong 78:27b

of Royal Judgment, which was also decided on the basis of plans drafted by the Two Boards.

Finally, let us briefly survey changes in the Letter of Appointment system during the early Joseon dynasty, that is, the Royal Letters of Appointment or Notice of Royal Appointment.

According to the reform of the Letters of Appointment system from the first year of the reign of King Taejo (1392), officials of the fourth rank and above were appointed with the Royal Letters of Appointment, which were composed in *imun* 吏文, a Chinese-style chancellery form of writing. In contrast, officials of the fifth rank and below were appointed with a Notice of Royal Appointment, which was composed in *idu* 吏讀, Korean represented phonetically with Chinese characters. The two Letters of Appointment for Kim Ji 金摯 (issued in 1410) are examples of the former,⁸² and the Notice of Call to Court from the Board of Military Personnel (issued in 1409) is an example of the latter.⁸³

Perhaps it was after the abolishment of the Personnel Authority that the Two Boards rather than the Department of Chancellery came to issue the Royal Letters of Appointment and the Notice of Royal Appointment (or Notice of Call to Court). In 1411, the order of Royal Judgment 判 was subsequently renamed Royal Order 教⁸⁴ and in 1425, the order of King's Instruction, or *wangji* 王旨, was renamed Royal Instruction, or *gyoji* 教旨.⁸⁵ Needless to say, the phrases "King's Instruction" and "Royal Judgment" in the Written Appointment were changed to "Royal Instruction" and "Royal Order," respectively.

In the third year of the reign of King Sejo (1457), Chinese-style chancellery writing, already standard for the Royal Letters of Appointment 官教, was adopted for use in the Written Appointment (or the Notice of Royal Appointment) for officials of the fifth rank and below. The following passage from the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty* provides details.

The Board of Civil Personnel reported to the King, saying "*Imun* is used for Written Appointments for successful candidates in the Clerk Examination, for the children of good families, and for Titles of Nobility for the dead and living. However, *idu* continues to be used for Written

⁸² Chōsenshi Henshukai 朝鮮史編修會 ed., *Chōsen Shiryō Shūshin* 朝鮮史料集眞 (Keijō: Chōsen Sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府, 1935-37). second series 2:6.

⁸³ op.cit., first series 1:3.

⁸⁴ *JSSL*, Taejong 22:26b

⁸⁵ *JSSL*, Sejong 29:3b

Appointments for officials of the fifth rank and below. It is very uncouth. We request that from this point forward, *imun* be used.” The King approved [their request].⁸⁶

This 1457 reform largely fixed the well-known format of Written Appointments preserved in *the Great Code of Administration*. According to that formulation, officials of the fourth rank and above (or lords) were appointed by Direct Appointment of the king and received Royal Letters of Appointment which were made and issued from the Two Boards. In contrast, officials of the fifth rank and below (or knights) were appointed on the basis of a draft plan compiled by the Two Boards and received Notices of Royal Appointment which were also made and issued from the Two Boards. Thus in the end, the line between Royal Letters of Appointment and Notice of Royal Appointment had come full circle. It now resembled the system of Tang dynasty China, where officials of the fifth rank and above (or lords) were appointed by the direct order of the Emperor and officials of the sixth rank and below (or knights) were appointed on the basis of plans drafted by the responsible authorities.

Under the Tang and early Goryeo, the State Councilors drew up the draft plan of appointment for the upper-level officials (or the Regular Participant of Court Rites). It was the royal prerogative in formality to make an appointment for the upper-level officials. However, it was decided in reality on the basis of the draft plan made by the State Councilors. In contrast, in the wake of the Personnel Authority, under the Joseon dynasty, the power of the State Councilors was severely reduced and the King directly selected candidates nominated by the Two Boards.

In these changes, we can perceive during the Joseon period a new level of despotic royal authority reached through the absorption of the Goryeo period Personnel Authority.

⁸⁶ *JSSL*, Sejo 8:19b

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